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## **Industrial Hemp Application Period Set to Open**

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**Charleston W.Va.** -- The West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA) announced the application period for the state's industrial hemp program will open September 1, 2019. Those interested in growing industrial hemp for the 2020 growing season must submit an application and all required materials by September 30, 2019 to be considered for licensure.

"Each year, the number of producers, as well as the general interest in industrial hemp continues to grow. Foresight by the West Virginia Legislature has allowed our producers to have a leg up on other states. Now that industrial hemp is a legal crop throughout our country, this is the time for producers to take advantage of this opportunity," said Commissioner of Agriculture Kent Leonhardt.

The number of West Virginia licensed industrial hemp growers jumped from 24 in 2017 to 178 in 2019. The producers who were granted a permit for the 2019 growing season planned on raising 2,531 acres of industrial hemp. The next growing season will be the third for commercial harvest of industrial hemp.

"We expect our federal partners to release draft rules later this year. Once they have those rules, West Virginia will have to issue our own state plan. We will inform producers of changes every step of the process," Leonhardt said.

The 2019 Farm Bill, signed by President Trump on December 20, 2018, authorized states to continue to operate under the 2014 Farm Bill until the USDA and FDA provided additional guidance. This extension ends 12 months after the USDA has issued a plan. States have until then to adjust local rules and regulations in order to come into compliance with federal standards.

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For more information, visit

<https://agriculture.wv.gov/divisions/plantindustries/Pages/Industrial-Hemp--.aspx>.

Additional questions or comments can be submitted to [Hemp@wvda.us](mailto:Hemp@wvda.us).

*The West Virginia Department of Agriculture protects plant, animal and human health through a variety of scientific, regulatory and consumer protection programs. The Commissioner of Agriculture is one of six statewide elected officials who sits on the Board of Public Works.*

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